

C O L O R A D O P A R K S & W I L D L I F E

Strategic Plan Progress Report

FY 2018-19



Letter from the Director

Dear Colleagues,

In my first few months serving as Director, I've watched our staff living out CPW's mission from an entirely new vantage point. Seeing the dedication you bring to achieving our mission of providing Colorado healthy wildlife populations, maintaining quality state parks and promoting stewardship among all Coloradans inspires me every day.

This new perspective also drives me to look forward, to what CPW and Colorado's natural resources will look like not only for the remainder of my tenure but for future generations - our children and grandchildren and those who come after. The six goals of our Strategic Plan embody the impressive efforts we make every day to fulfill our mission, and will guide our actions when facing future challenges together.

I ask you to review this Strategic Plan Progress Update and feel pride in the work we've done to achieve these goals over the past three years. Then take a moment to consider how your duties and efforts today may evolve as Colorado continues to rapidly change.

As the state's population grows, and as the ways Coloradans choose to "live life outside" change, there will be complex decisions being made in balancing the needs of conservation and recreation in our state. And there are no better managers of that effort than our staff, who serve at that intersection each and every day. It is up to each of us to be proactive in working to implement this Strategic Plan, demonstrating how our work is relevant to all Coloradans, and ensuring our readiness to meet any future challenges head-on.



Dan Prenzlou
Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

VISION

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is a national leader in wildlife management, conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

MISSION

To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state park system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. (C.R.S. 33-9-101)



COVER: Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Colorado's state mammal, © Wayne D. Lewis, CPW

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the dedicated Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff members who helped develop the Strategic Plan and are leading the implementation of the Operational Plans. We are grateful for their ongoing efforts to track and report the outcomes and impacts of our work.

We would also like to thank CPW's Public Information Unit for their writing and editing assistance, as well as CPW's Marketing Unit for their help designing the format of this report.

Finally, we would like to thank CPW's Leadership Team and the Parks and Wildlife Commission for their important feedback and support throughout the process of creating and implementing the Strategic and Operational Plans.



Great Horned Owl chick

WAYNE D. LEWIS/CPW

CPW Commission

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- Dan Prenzlów, *Director*
- Brett Ackerman, *Southeast Region Manager*
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- Reid DeWalt, *Assistant Director for Wildlife and Natural Resources*
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Introduction

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan (Plan), finalized in November 2015, provides a roadmap for achieving the agency’s vision and mission through concrete goals and objectives. The public, stakeholders, partners, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, and CPW staff participated in shaping the vision of CPW and the development of the Plan.

The Plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies are intended to be updated as needed. To implement the Plan, CPW developed a two-year Operational Plan for FY 2016-2017 and FY 2017-2018 and subsequent two-year operational plan for FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020, with actionable sub-objectives and measurable metrics. This annual report provides a snapshot of CPW’s work by highlighting our progress on 58 sub-objectives (Appendix 1) after the first year (halfway point) of implementing the FY 18/19 - FY 19/20 Operational Plan.

The six Plan goals:

1. Conserve wildlife habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems
2. Manage state parks for world-class outdoor recreation
3. Achieve and maintain financial sustainability
4. Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers
5. Increase awareness and trust for CPW
6. Connect people to Colorado’s outdoors

Overall progress

In the first year of implementing the FY 18/19 - FY 19/20 Operational Plan, we have made significant progress towards achieving a number of our objectives. We are on track or making significant progress towards meeting our two-year metrics for over 98 percent of the sub-objectives identified in the FY 18/19 - FY 19/20 Operational Plan (Figure 1).

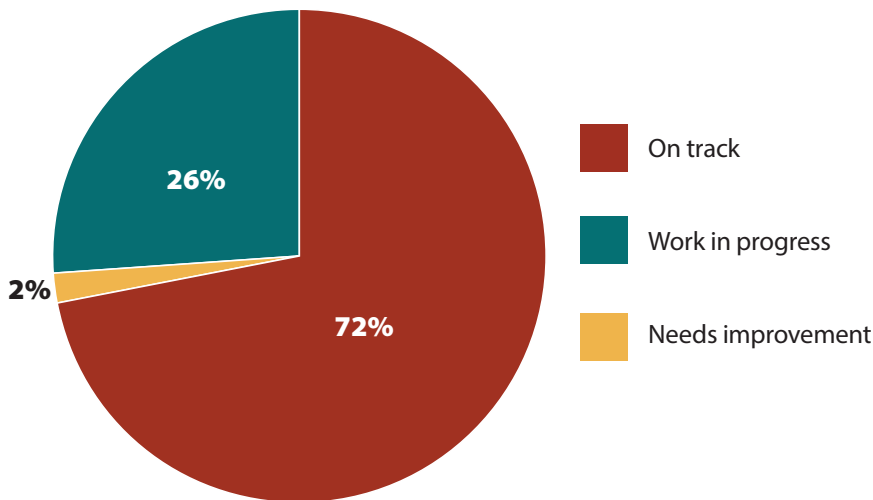


Figure 1: Status of progress on sub-objectives in the FY 18/19 - FY 19/20 Operational Plan after FY 2018-2019 (halfway point)

Goal Achievements

This section provides highlights of progress we have made implementing the Strategic Plan. These accomplishments occurred between July 2018 and June 2019, unless otherwise specified.

Goal 1: Conserve wildlife and habitat

Manage sustainable populations of game and nongame species to support fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife-viewing opportunities

Sustaining populations of big game species is essential to the mission of CPW. Keeping herd management plans (HMPs) up-to-date is critical as they help to determine population and herd management objectives. In the past year alone, CPW biologists have completed 15 HMPs, which is just shy of the annual goal of completing 16 HMPs. Herd management planning continues to be a priority for CPW staff, with a schedule for increasing HMP output now in place.

Similarly, reducing or limiting the prevalence of chronic wasting disease (CWD) is essential to maintaining sustainable populations of big game species. In early 2019, the Parks and Wildlife Commission approved the first statewide CWD Response Plan, a significant achievement. CPW staff developed the Response Plan with the help of a CWD Advisory Group comprised of representatives of various stakeholder groups including: Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, Coloradans for Responsible Wildlife Management, Outfitters, Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Wildlife Management Institute. In accordance with the Response Plan, CPW is conducting mandatory testing across many areas of the state to generate reliable estimates of CWD prevalence. Additionally, CPW requires management actions in all deer herds with a prevalence of CWD in adult males that exceeds 5% of the population.

Ensuring sustainable populations of fish requires regularly evaluating and updating CPW's recreational fishery management strategies. Fishery management strategy summaries are also a good way for CPW to communicate with anglers about the status of the fishery and management goals for the specific waters. Statewide, in FY 19 CPW's biologists were able to complete 69 of 124 fishery management summaries (56%), above the target of 50% completion.

Preserve and enhance diverse habitat

Ensuring healthy and sustainable wildlife populations and ecosystems also requires conserving and enhancing priority habitat across the state. In support of this goal, CPW's Real Estate Section successfully re-instituted a grant program that helps landowners conserve their land through the purchase of conservation easements in priority habitats. CPW received almost 20 applications in the last grant cycle, and in March 2019 alone, the Real Estate Section secured conservation easements on over 3,500 acres of land.

In addition to conserving land, CPW staff also work to restore and improve degraded habitat across the state. To aid in these efforts, CPW's Terrestrial Section has developed a statewide habitat database to document and monitor habitat improvement efforts. This cataloging system helps CPW staff track habitat treatment projects and ensure treatments for priority species are completed. In FY 19 alone, examples of CPW habitat work included improving nearly 3,700 acres of wetland habitat, over 11,300 acres for big game species as a part of the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy, and 700 acres of small game habitat through the Corners for Conservation Program.

Finally, improving habitat in streams and lakes, as well as facilitating fish passage helps make healthier fisheries and increases the likelihood of maintaining self-sustaining populations of fish. In FY 19, in cooperation with other agencies, stakeholder groups and volunteers, CPW's Aquatics staff completed six stream habitat improvement projects, five lake/reservoir habitat improvement projects, and three large fish passage projects. This is above the goal of two stream habitat project and two fish passage projects set for June 2020.

Manage and monitor species of greatest conservation need while working with partners to maintain viable populations

Conserving nongame wildlife is an important goal, however historically this work has depended on unpredictable grant funding. In 2019, CPW staff secured funding for several projects to help manage and monitor Colorado's species of greatest conservation need. These funds will be used to continue implementation of sylvatic plague management to benefit prairie dogs and associated species; to establish a landowner incentive program to benefit black-footed ferrets; to support long-term population monitoring of bats and black-tailed prairie dogs; and to provide programmatic support for the Resource Stewardship Program and the Colorado Natural Areas Program.

Additionally, staff have worked with partners in many planning processes, such as recovery planning for Gunnison sage grouse, and species status assessments for white-tailed ptarmigan and black rail. Long-term monitoring programs continue to be implemented for birds species (through the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions Program (IMBCR) led by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies) and for bats (through the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat)). Additionally, monitoring continues for lynx in southwestern Colorado and for grouse species through annual lek counts. Two important translocation efforts continue to be implemented. First, the final year of a four-year project was completed for translocating lesser prairie chicken; moving birds from Kansas into suitable habitat in southeastern Colorado. Monitoring of birds will continue into 2020. Second, translocation of greater sage grouse from North Park to the North Eagle/South Routt population continued and is scheduled to be completed in 2020.

Work also continues to create and expand native cutthroat trout populations. In FY 19, three large new water reclamation projects were started, and two others moved into the second phase of implementation. All five of these projects will ultimately result in new cutthroat populations once completed. In addition, four significant fish barriers were constructed to prevent non-native fish from returning to these streams. Finally, three



new streams were stocked for the first time with native cutthroats and two new populations were discovered and protected.

Protect and enhance water resources for fish and wildlife populations

Maintaining and securing water rights for wildlife habitat is very important for both wildlife and recreation across Colorado. During FY 19, among other things, CPW Water Section staff conducted an analysis of water rights included in real estate acquisitions, then filed water court applications at Chatfield State Fish Unit, Mueller State Park, Wray Hatchery, Basalt State Wildlife Area, and Yampa Ponds State Wildlife Area and successfully obtained water rights decrees on most of these (two are still pending), well above the goal of filing a minimum of four water court applications. Staff also protected CPW's water rights from injury and negotiated settlements or otherwise closed out about 10 cases where CPW was not the applicant.

Protecting water quality is also important for providing quality habitat for fisheries and for water-based recreation. CPW helps to protect and restore water quality through participation in the Colorado Clean Water Act decision processes. This includes reviewing all proposed water quality changes, participating in the Water Quality Control Commission, and tracking all hazardous spill reports, which may result in fish kills. Fortunately, in 2018, there were no major fish kills as there have been in previous years. In addition, CPW staff provided training in SB40 Stream Certification, which requires state agencies who will be working alongside or in streams to submit plans to CPW for review. This helps to reduce negative impacts on the stream and ensures best management practices are implemented to improve water quality.

Keeping water in rivers (also known as instream flow protection) is also critical to the survival of fish and aquatic life, as well as to providing recreational opportunities. Last year, CPW staff collected and analyzed data on 43 different stream cross-sections for recommendation to the Colorado Water Conservation Board for instream flow protection, over twice the goal of 20 recommendations for FY 19. As a result of that work,



Preventing Drought at Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA)

The Arkansas River is considered one of the most popular whitewater rafting and fishing destinations in the United States. The River flows through the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA), which is operated through a cooperative effort between the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, and CPW. The Arkansas River within the AHRA is unique in that, unlike any other river in Colorado, it is operated

under what is known as the Voluntary Flow Management Program (VFMP) since the 1990s. The VFMP was developed by several local, state and federal agencies to manage flows for the benefit of the fishery and whitewater boating opportunities.

The 2018 drought year was challenging to maintain sufficient flows in the Arkansas River. Exceptional collaborative efforts by CPW, federal, state and local agencies, as well as fishing and rafting outfitters resulted in an agreement to release additional water from upstream reservoirs during the summer to save the recreation season. Astonishingly, compared with a more normal year such as 2017, the outcome of this collaborative effort resulted only in minor losses (slightly over 2%) in the number of Park visitors and actually a slight increase (1.5%) in total revenue. The VFMP is a great model of cooperation in Colorado, facilitated by our various partners and the dedicated staff at CPW

a stream that contains one of the few remaining populations of the San Juan lineage of the Colorado River Cutthroat Trout will be protected. Additionally, CPW revised the recommendation process to allow for better staff input.

Finally, without a reliable source of water, Colorado’s state parks could lose some of their biggest attractions. For that reason, CPW staff work hard to secure water rights in state parks and to find solutions to maintain lakes and ponds in parks that have no water rights. The preventative response to the 2018 drought at the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (Box 1), is a prime example of the importance of this work for state park visitors.

Conduct research and monitoring to inform management decisions

Studies conducted by CPW’s research scientists are essential for making sound management decisions. In FY 19, CPW’s research scientists produced 50 peer-reviewed publications, 29 annual reports, and 12 Federal Aid reports on a variety of topics including investigations on avian, aquatic, and mammal species, as well as wild-life health management issues. In addition, CPW is working to improve communication between researchers and staff managing wildlife on the ground by incorporating communication objectives into the performance management plans for all research staff. Finally, CPW research staff wrote a report highlighting how research findings have been put into practice.



Goal 2: Manage state parks for world-class recreation

Manage facilities and outdoor recreation amenities within state parks to provide positive experiences for Coloradans and visitors

To better plan for future maintenance needs, the Capital Development Section is developing an asset inventory for state parks, which provides an overall picture of the current assets owned by CPW and their condition. In the past year, CPW staff gathered construction drawings from state parks in three of the four regions of the state and entered the assets for seven of the largest state parks into a Geographic Information System (GIS). Additionally, CPW staff are developing an asset maintenance tracking and reporting system, which will allow CPW to plan and budget for long-term maintenance needs and costs. This also responds to the public's desire for recreation managers to prioritize long-term management and maintenance of existing infrastructure.¹

Outdoor recreation in Colorado's state parks depends on healthy landscapes. Without sufficient knowledge of the details of these landscapes, it is difficult to manage them sustainably. Towards that end, in FY 19, the CPW Resource Stewardship Section performed 37 natural resource inventories at several state parks to inform resource stewardship plans and state park management plans for each park. This work includes cataloguing the species of birds, reptiles and amphibians, identifying noxious weeds and assessing the condition of the habitat. Citizen science projects such as iNaturalist and the Raptor Monitoring Program, which leverage volunteer resources to assist with monitoring efforts, are also essential. iNaturalist, which allows state park visitors to submit observations of different species of plants and animals, has now seen over 12,000 submissions. Additionally, the Raptor Monitoring program now has over 200 registered participants and is operational at 29 state parks.

Explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks

With growing demand for state parks, in 2018, the Colorado General Assembly passed the Future Generations Act, calling on CPW to plan for the development of new state parks. To further that effort, CPW developed systematic criteria to evaluate potential new state parks or parklands that are consistent with the vision and mission of CPW.

Market the special qualities of Colorado's state parks

In addition to activities referenced under Goal 6, CPW staff also successfully hosted the 2019 Rocky Mountain State Parks Executive Conference (RMSPEC). Through field trips and panel discussions, this conference helped introduce key state park system leaders from across the western United States to many aspects of Colorado's state park system. In a post-conference survey, 81% of the participants ranked their experience as "excellent," serving as an important marketing tool for Colorado's state park amenities.

Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products

CPW provides first class customer service throughout its state parks. Towards that end, 40 self-service kiosks, which allow customers to purchase passes at any time of the day, are now operational at 22 state parks. Similarly, CPW staff are hoping to use new technology to improve how visitor numbers are collected and measured. The now fully operational Visitor Activity Program (VAP) is a step in the right direction, as all visitation measurements are now tracked in a single application. CPW also implemented a "reservation-only" system at 22 state parks. This new system allows campers to reserve a site 24/7, from six months in advance up until the day of their arrival, by logging on to cpwshop.com from a computer or smartphone or calling CPW.

¹2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. p. 4.

Goal 3: Achieve and maintain financial sustainability

Identify potential new and broader sources of funding

To achieve and maintain financial sustainability, CPW needs to expand the options and paths for financial contributions to a broader audience. As a first step in that process, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and CPW completed the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Future Funding Study in October 2018, which identified and analyzed potential new sources of funding for CPW. The study identified increasing the relevancy of CPW to non-consumptive users as a needed step towards diversifying the agency's funding, and Governor Polis recently set a Wildly Important Goal to increase sustainable funding for parks and wildlife. As a first step, CPW staff is working to establish a baseline of Coloradans' familiarity with CPW and their values, testing messaging to increase the relevancy of CPW with key audiences and using these data to develop a framework for engaging targeted groups in efforts to increase sustainable revenue sources for CPW.

Maintain existing sources of funding

Understanding the current financial standing and being able to anticipate future challenges or gaps is critical to determining CPW's capacity for funding strategic goals. Better financial modeling also helps staff understand the financial implications of decisions and make more reliable plans. However, making progress towards improving budget projections has been challenging this year due to data reporting problems associated with the new Integrated Parks and Wildlife Licensing System (IPAWS). Steady work with the vendor of the system has resulted in important modifications. CPW received a system update in September 2019 and significant progress has been made in reconciling the old and new systems.

Deploy financial and workforce resources responsibly

In addition to identifying new sources of funding, it is important for CPW to manage and deploy its existing resources responsibly. In FY 19, progress towards this objective was made by using the annual funding plan to guide resource allocation decision making for FY 20. This resulted in the simplification of federal aid grant funding, more efficient use of Great Outdoors Colorado funding, and a refinance of six different activities used throughout the state.

Additionally, CPW is working to refine the process for developing its multi-year funding plan. Beginning with the FY 21 large capital project list, CPW's Capital Unit is providing more specific and time-bound budgets, which helps the Budget Office to more accurately develop its multi-year funding plan. This will then be used to help predict resource allocations going forward.

Goal 4: Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers

Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of all personnel

To attract and retain staff, CPW must create a sense of belonging and trust, provide opportunities for professional and personal development, and foster a communicative and collaborative environment. Because effective internal communication is the foundation for all of these elements, CPW staff are investing time and resources to improve internal communication. Towards that end, the internal webpage, CPWNet, is being redesigned, to make it a more effective resource for staff. The results of these initiatives are starting to be seen, and a recent survey conducted by Employee Development showed a 16% improvement in overall satisfaction with internal communication at CPW.

Recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce

A large part of maintaining dedicated personnel is attracting qualified candidates that meet CPW's needs. However, the competitive economy means additional effort is often required to ensure the candidate pool is robust and well qualified. To address these challenges, CPW has formed a Recruitment and Retention Team that meets monthly to develop strategies to increase the number of qualified applicants for key positions. For example, a new Park Ranger Prep Academy helped to support 15 interested candidates in preparing their applications for the Park Manager position. Additionally, CPW staff conducted a question and answer session live on Facebook to increase awareness of the Park Manager and District Wildlife Manager positions, and worked with DNR's Human Resources team to better promote temporary, seasonal job opportunities. Finally, career kits have been placed in CPW's offices statewide to help with career education events throughout the state.

Increasing and retaining employees from diverse backgrounds within CPW's workforce is also essential to remain relevant to all Coloradans and an area of focus under DNR's Wildly Important Goal on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The CPW Recruitment and Retention Team has been updating CPW's website and marketing videos to highlight diverse employees and adding diversity value statements to job announcement templates. They have also provided resources for staff to foster more equitable hiring and avoid unconscious bias in hiring, and, as part of a multi-agency Equitable Workforce committee, they are developing a hiring and retention guide for Colorado state agencies. The team has assisted various sections of the agency in their collaborations to help create a more inclusive environment for our public. For example, Employee Development staff developed and facilitated a new Customer Service for All training for the Southeast Region staff



to assist and support customers with disabilities and partnered with the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in a new pilot program to facilitate sign language interpretation services. They also assisted in funding 10 scholarships for young professionals from diverse backgrounds to participate in the Partners in the Outdoors conference; and added new questions about inclusion in CPW's work environment to the biennial CPW Employee Development Survey. Finally, because successful efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion often take a long time to develop, CPW is also investing time in cultivating relationships with organizations and individuals representing diverse communities to better understand their needs and reinforce CPW as an employer of choice for candidates from all backgrounds and abilities.

Providing training to develop job skills and encourage professional growth is also an important way for CPW to invest in its employees and retain dedicated personnel. To support this objective, in the past year, CPW piloted the FranklinCovey Online Leadership Pilot Program, expanded the curriculum of the Daniels School Leadership training, continued the Insights Discovery Program, and added the Maintenance Management Leadership School. These investments appear to be working as 80% of employees reported receiving training in the most recent Employee Development survey, and CPW has seen a 37% increase in supervisor support for providing training opportunities.

Attract inspired volunteers committed to CPW's mission

Volunteers are essential to CPW, as they help to expand CPW's services across the state. In FY 19, almost 6,000 volunteers contributed 331,272 hours of time. That is an equivalent value of \$9.2 million or 159 full-time employees. To better support staff in attracting and managing volunteers, in FY 19, the Volunteer Program updated its staff manual and volunteer handbook to provide guidance on the best ways to incorporate volunteers into CPW activities and it will continue rolling out this guidance through staff trainings in FY 20. Additionally, the Volunteer Program conducted the annual survey of volunteers' experiences and it is developing ways to improve. Overall, 88% of respondents said they enjoyed volunteering with CPW and 90% said they feel that their efforts make a difference.



Volunteers work with CPW staff to build a trail at Cheyenne Mountain State Park.

CRYSTAL EGLI/CPW

Goal 5: Increase awareness and trust for CPW

Communicate information about CPW's mission, funding and key programs

Getting CPW's message out to a wider audience is important for building awareness about the agency. One of the most successful tools CPW staff have developed are digital media kits on targeted topics, like "Bear Aware," "Aquatic Nuisance Species" and "Leaving Young Wildlife Alone." These kits include videos and flyers on the topic, in addition to a press release that delivers the exact message CPW wants to convey. The use of media kits has been hugely successful. As an example, media kits used between January and March 2019 yielded over 7,700 mentions across TV, Radio, Online News, and social channels. This provided an estimated reach of over 23.5 million National TV audience impressions, 11.8 million TV impressions, an online news audience of 11 billion and a social media audience of 281 million. The earned media value for television coverage was just under \$4.5 million, and online publicity value of \$250 million. Staff have also started to publish a monthly column on the Rookie Sportsman Program, which has been published in many Colorado newspapers to reach new users and make hunting and angling feel more accessible. CPW is also in the process of developing a strategy to better highlight and celebrate the conservation work that is done through the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program's acquisition of conservation and access easements.

Provide opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement

To best serve the people of Colorado, it is important that CPW understands what the public wants and needs. Communicating more frequently and more consistently and analyzing which methods of communication best serve different populations, helps CPW build stronger channels of communication. In collaboration with relevant sections and branches, the Public Information Unit has strategized appropriate communication materials and channels for many high-profile projects, including the implementation of the Future Generations Act, big game season structure changes, and the development of criteria to determine the next state park. This new level of internal collaboration has been highly successful in making sure the public receives clear, timely and consistent communication about CPW's activities.

Effectively engaging with the public also requires managing customer outreach and interactions to minimize survey fatigue. Towards that end, CPW is developing internal guidelines to inform when and how our customers are contacted, as well as a tracking system to better manage the volume of requests.

Finally, by surveying visitors to understand how they use state parks and their satisfaction with current state park management, CPW can involve the public in state park operations and planning and better cater to customers' changing expectations, experiences and potentially, changing needs. In the past year, CPW began pilot testing a visitor use and satisfaction study in eight state parks using multiple research methods. The results of this pilot year will help to determine the most efficient and cost-effective way for CPW to study visitor use and satisfaction going forward.

Increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife management

CPW works in collaboration with the Colorado Wildlife Council (CWC) to increase public awareness about the benefits of hunting and fishing. In FY 19, funding for the CWC increased, from a 75-cent surcharge per wildlife license sold to \$1.50, doubling the Council's budget. This additional funding will help the CWC increase its comprehensive media-based campaign, strengthen research about the target audience and continue to expand the agency's reach through different messaging channels.

Increasing angler support for and knowledge about CPW's fishery management is especially important in the Northwest and Southwest regions of the state, where there have been concerns about non-native fishery management. To assist with that effort, CPW staff is developing a strategy to engage anglers in fishery management issues in western Colorado. CPW is also planning to hold two angler focus groups to facilitate two-way information sharing with anglers. These steps will help to improve communication, understanding and trust between CPW and anglers.

Goal 6: Connect people to Colorado's outdoors

Broaden the access and variety of recreation opportunities available to Coloradans and visitors

In Colorado, recreation on public lands is central to our identity, quality of life, and economy. Colorado's continued growth is increasing demand for quality outdoor recreation opportunities, which is already beginning to exceed the capacity of our current resources. Securing additional appropriate lands dedicated to public access is necessary to meet rising demand while inspiring the next generation of outdoor stewards, and making our outdoors and healthy living more inclusive of, and available to, all Coloradans. To that end, CPW is instrumental in achieving DNR's Wildly Important Goal to Increase Public Access. CPW expects to increase acres of public access easements, leases, and other agreements to 2.1 million total acres by June 30, 2022.

The Public Access Program, which provides seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities on Colorado trust land across the state, is one of several ways hunters and anglers can get out in Colorado. In July 2019, CPW announced a significant increase to the Public Access Program, as part of a multi-year effort to double its size from 480,000 acres to 1,000,000 acres. This marks the first major expansion of the program since it began in 1993. So far, in FY 19, CPW has added over 75,000 acres to the Public Access Program.

Another way that CPW helps to expand opportunities to access the outdoors is by obtaining public access easements for fishing and hunting on private land. The Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP), which is managed by CPW's Real Estate Section, is an annual grant program that allows private landowners to voluntarily provide wildlife-related recreational access to the public. In FY 19, CPW closed on several large projects, in partnership with the Colorado land trust community, including the Hale River Ranch access easement (402 acres), the Pothook Ranch access easement (2,357 acres), and the Flanders Ranch access easement (1,659 acres).

Trails are how many residents and visitors access and are able to connect to Colorado's nature and wildlife. CPW funds projects that expand connections to existing outdoor recreation opportunities, improve the proximity and benefit of trails to local communities, mitigate wildlife and natural resource degradation, fund long-term operation and maintenance, and assist with large scale regional trail and resource planning. In FY 19, CPW awarded 10 grants for over \$3.8 million.

However, ensuring that residents and visitors have meaningful nature-based experiences requires maintaining healthy natural systems. CPW's Resource Stewardship program performs biological inventories at each state park, monitors the quality of park resources, creates best management practices and applies best available science to guide management decisions on state parks. This can include modifying the timing or placement of infrastructure to help mitigate the influences of recreation on the landscape. The program also uses citizen science to help monitor state parks' natural resources. Efforts such as raptor monitoring, habitat monitoring, invasive plant monitoring and species inventories provide meaningful information while connecting people to Colorado's outdoors. Due to these site-specific inventory and monitoring projects, adaptive management actions can then be taken to conserve park resources and improve future park management decisions. FY 19 projects included wildlife and habitat surveys, weed management planning, and a wildlife distribution study at Lone Mesa State Park.

Continuing to offer educational and interpretive programs and hands-on training for new or basic outdoors skills is an important way that CPW encourages both Coloradans and visitors to get outside and be active stewards. CPW staff are working to support and streamline existing programs that have proven to be successful and develop new programs that help to recruit target audiences.

Provide facilities, infrastructure and access to support opportunities for premier outdoor recreation experiences

Providing appropriate facilities and infrastructure is also an important part of facilitating premier outdoor recreation experiences. Towards that end, CPW is developing long range planning strategies to maintain and improve large capital assets like dams, hatcheries and shooting ranges. For example, CPW's Hatchery Section staff have developed a phased system to help modernize the state hatcheries. The first phase of the project involves

an analysis of the current fish stocking process. An outside consultant was recently selected and work is scheduled to begin in FY 20.

Additionally, CPW is working to determine the backlog of maintenance needs to better allow for budgeting and planning in the short- and long-term. To help accomplish this goal, staff are working to develop an inventory of park buildings and facilities and determine the existing condition of these assets. In FY 19, work focused on documenting the underground utilities for 18 parks.

Similarly, by identifying and implementing needed technological improvements, CPW will be able to provide better customer service and world-class recreation experiences. Towards that end, in FY 19, CPW staff completed an upgrade plan that identifies and gaps and deficiencies in CPW's technology infrastructure and implementation of the plan is underway. Similarly, CPW staff have worked hard in FY 19 to make the new Integrated Parks and Wildlife Licensing System (IPAWS) fully operational. This includes adding functionality to administer vehicle registrations and hunter reservations, as well as improving the functionality of the system's data mart.

Foster partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities

Partnerships help CPW to build alignment, awareness and trust for the agency. CPW's Partners Program helps to foster alignment and trust through several outward-facing initiatives, such as the Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP). The CO-OP is a collaborative group representing diverse interests at the intersection of outdoor recreation and conservation. In FY 2019, the CO-OP continued its efforts to ensure Colorado's private and public lands support wildlife, outdoor recreation, agricultural heritage, and economic well-being for generations to come. The group met quarterly and worked to develop the Colorado Pathway, a document highlighting areas where collaboration is particularly needed to advance outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado.

CPW's Partners Program also organizes the Partners in the Outdoors Conference, which is proving to be the signature platform in the state for organizations to network and collaborate to advance and balance outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado. The 2019 conference was a rousing success with attendance increasing 11% from 2018 to nearly 575 people representing over 250 organizations.

Finally, developing new partnerships and enhancing existing partnerships within the outdoor industry is one of CPW's goals, and staff made significant progress this year by connecting to over 35 Colorado companies at the June 2019 Outdoor Retailer Show. More Colorado companies have begun promoting CPW's Live Life Outside campaign and 39 partners adopted CPW's Outdoor Principles in the past year.

Promote the value of CPW's mission and services to expand awareness, grow CPW's volunteer network and inspire stewardship

Promoting the value of CPW requires a consistent communication and innovative marketing. In line with that objective, CPW completed a guide for "Talking and Writing about CPW," which guides agency staff how to talk and write about the agency, provides a marketing pitch, and identifies key taglines. CPW also launched a new marketing campaign, called "Live Life Outside," which helps remind CPW's core audiences of their shared appreciation of the Colorado outdoors and the importance of conservation and responsible recreation. Phase one of the campaign ended in June and the second phase will begin in FY 20.

Become familiar with the needs, interests and expectations of residents and visitors who are new to outdoor recreation

Finally, it is important for CPW to know the current demand for outdoor recreation in Colorado, as well as the barriers and opportunities to achieving Colorado's outdoor recreation priorities. The 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which was released in December 2018, identifies priorities, as well as barriers and opportunities through research and partner input. Implementing the SCORP will require collaboration and action from organizations across the state. To help facilitate this process, the 2019 Partners in the Outdoors Conference was designed to foster collaboration around the 2019-2023 SCORP priorities.

Appendix 1: Status of Progress by Sub-Objective

This table highlights the status of CPW's progress after FY 2018-19 (halfway point) towards achieving two-year sub-objectives for the FY 18/19 - FY 19/20 Operational Plan. Tracking and reporting on sub-objectives provides a snapshot of information to help evaluate our progress towards accomplishing our strategic goals, while increasing our accountability and transparency.



"On track" means there were no major challenges in the past year and we are halfway to achieving the sub-objective.



"Work in progress" indicates some challenges were encountered and at the current moment, we are less than halfway to achieving the sub-objective.







"Needs improvement" indicates that there were major challenges, and significant changes will need to be made to achieve the sub-objective by the end of 2020.

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STATUS
Goal 1: Conserve wildlife and habitat	A. Manage sustainable populations	Complete timely revisions and amendments of herd management plans to ensure plans are up to date per ten year periods	
		Reduce or limit CWD prevalence below the management threshold as set in the 2019 CWD Response Plan for free-ranging deer, elk and moose herds.	
		Evaluate and update recreational fishery management strategies	
	B. Preserve & enhance habitat	Priority habitat is conserved statewide tracked in acres (for land) and miles (water) through Real Estate (Fee title, Conservation Easement, donation etc.)	
		Terrestrial habitat treatments for priority species or species groups are completed and tracked in acres (land) and number of projects	
		Improvements of wetland habitat	
		Improvements of big game habitat	
		Improvement of small game habitat (Corners for Conservation)	
		Improvements of aquatic habitat	
	C. Manage & monitor species of greatest conservation need while working with partners to maintain viable populations	Manage & monitor terrestrial species of greatest conservation need	
		Work with partners to maintain viable populations of terrestrial species of greatest conservation need.	
		Evaluate and update native aquatic species management and quantify by water classification	
	D. Protect and enhance water resources	Water for habitat, fish, and recreation (including reservoir levels for wildlife and recreation) is improved or protected through administration of CPW's water rights	
		Protect and restore water quality through participation in Colorado Clean Water Act decision processes to advocate for outcomes most protective of aquatic life	
		Assisting Colorado Water Conservation Board to obtain or protect instream flow/natural lake level water rights	
		Securing water supply for parks for drinking and sanitation uses and reservoir levels for recreation through filing water court applications and entering new or renewing existing water agreements	

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STATUS	
	E. Conduct research to inform management	Production of applied research for management of fish and wildlife in Colorado.	✓	
		Provide communication of scientific results from researchers to managers, planning and reporting meetings	✓	
Goal 2: Manage state parks for world class recreation	A. Manage facilities & outdoor recreation amenities	Develop an asset inventory for all state parks	✓	
		Standardize Asset Tracking and Reporting within the agency	➔	
		Complete timely resource stewardship management actions to maintain natural values of each state park	✓	
	B. Explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks	Develop systematic criteria to evaluate potential new state parks or parklands consistent with the vision and mission of CPW. Reinvigorate the state parks expansion criteria and ensure it is used throughout the identification process		✓
	C. Market the special qualities of Colorado's state parks.	See Goal 6	✓	
		Host 2019 Rocky Mountain State Parks Executive Conference (RMSPEC) attended by key state park system leaders from the western United States	✓	
	D. Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products (strategy under Objective C)	Roll out new self-serve kiosks to improve customer service	✓	
		Measure visitation in a consistent and reliable manner. Assess current collection methodology, identifying gaps and improving process	➔	
	Goal 3: Achieve & maintain financial sustainability	A. Identify potential new and broader sources of funding	Complete alternative funding study and explore potential next steps with interested stakeholders	✓
		B. Maintain existing sources of funding	Review and improve budget projections	➔
C. Deploy financial & workforce resources responsibly		Use annual funding plan to guide spending decisions	✓	
		Refine process for developing multi-year funding plan	✓	
Goal 4: Maintain dedicated personnel & volunteers	A. Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of all personnel	Improve internal communications in CPW	➔	
	B. Recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce	Address recruitment challenges	✓	
		Diversity/inclusion - moving the agency toward reflecting our state's demographics	📄	
		Develop job skills and encourage professional growth	✓	
	C. Attract inspired volunteers committed to CPW's mission	The number of volunteer hours dedicated to CPW increases	✓	

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STATUS
Goal 5: Increase awareness & trust for CPW	A. Communicate information about CPW's mission, funding, and key programs.	Develop messaging to be used by all CPW staff to communicate about the agency	
		Create salient communication strategies for targeted populations/ audiences and evaluate success of these messages	
	B. Provide opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement	Provide opportunities for stakeholders and the public to engage with CPW through key communication channels	
		Identify methods to better manage customer outreach/interactions and minimize survey fatigue	
		Measure and communicate state park visitor satisfaction	
	C. Increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife management	Continue to fund the Wildlife Education Fund (Wildlife Council)	
		Increase angler support for and knowledge about CPW fishery management within the NW Region	
	Goal 6: Connect people to Colorado's outdoors	A. Broaden access opportunities available to Coloradans and visitors	Offer educational, interpretive programs and hands-on training for new or basic outdoor skills
Improve outdoor recreation opportunities across the state with the goal of connecting people to trails and outdoors recreation opportunities			
Plans advance sustainable design and management for trail recreation development and maintenance with consideration to wildlife conservation management			
Increase understanding and awareness for how outdoor recreation activities and infrastructure influence natural resources			
Obtain Public Access for fishing and hunting to expand opportunities on private land while maintaining opportunities on public lands			
B. Provide facilities, infrastructure, and access to support opportunities for premier outdoor recreation experiences.		Create internal long range planning strategies for CPW's dams	
		Create internal long range planning strategies for CPW's hatchery system	
		Create internal long range planning strategies for CPW's shooting ranges	
		Determine the comprehensive maintenance backlog	
		IPAWs - research, develop and implement technology that will improve interaction with and service to CPW's customers	
		Implement and update an ongoing upgrade plan to identify and evaluate gaps and deficiencies in technology infrastructure	

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STATUS
	C. Foster partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities.	Provide opportunities to develop new and enhance existing partnerships across Colorado	
	D. Promote the value of CPW's mission and services to expand awareness, grow CPW's volunteer network, and inspire stewardship.	A marketing plan guides communication regarding programs	
	E. Become familiar with the needs, interests, and expectations of residents and visitors who are new to outdoor recreation.	Identify user demand and use levels for outdoor recreation while also identifying barriers and opportunities to support and develop outdoor recreation priorities	
		Conduct post surveys for educational, interpretive programs and hands-on training for new or basic outdoor skills	



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